



**A PASTORAL ENCYCLICAL
ON FREEMASONRY**



I AM THE TRUE VINE ✠ YE ARE THE BRANCHES

**BY
BISHOP EPHRAIM AND BISHOP MAKARIOS**

holy Faith, so that, not only in this matter, but in all matters that pertain to the Orthodox Faith we may, "be ready always to give an answer to every man concerning the hope that is in us" (cf. 1 Peter 3:15).

With these sentiments, we pray that the grace, peace, love, and truth of our Saviour, the All-holy Theotokos, and of all the Saints be with you all, ever protecting you from the snares of the enemy of our salvation, and guiding your footsteps in the truth. Amen.

Your fervent suppliants unto God,

✠ Ephraim, Bishop of Boston

✠ Makarios, Bishop of Toronto

Sunday of All Saints

1993

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*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

To the Beloved and Pious Priests, Deacons, Monastics
and Faithful Flock of our North American Parishes

Beloved brethren and children in the Lord,

At our General Clergy Synaxis held in September of 1992, it was decided that an Encyclical be prepared on the question of Freemasonry. Already, articles in periodicals of our Church have documented how many non-Christian concepts and "New Age" ideas have infiltrated the Papal and Protestant denominations. With grief, we note that identical anti-Christian beliefs have appeared in statements made by ecumenistic, nominally Orthodox bishops.

We believe that the cause for this ominous development lies, in part, in the influence of Freemasonry. Most Protestants today see no problem with the Masonic movement, and hence, many are members of it. Although the Papacy still does not approve of membership in the Masonic lodge, its position in this matter became somewhat ambiguous when, on January 25, 1983, it officially dropped the penalty of excommunication against those of its adherents who had become members of Freemasonry.

On her part, the Orthodox Church has repeatedly condemned the Masonic movement. For example, Archbishop Cyprian of Cyprus (later slain by the Moslems) issued a very strong encyclical

against Freemasonry on February 2, 1821. Likewise, Archbishop Hierotheus of Patras, Greece, published two comprehensive encyclicals against Masonry, one on October 5, 1897, and another on August 22, 1899.

In the circles of today's World Orthodoxy, however, the current hierarchy, for the most part, has maintained a steadfast silence on this subject. Although a few synods — such as that of the State Church in Greece back in the 1930's — took a stance against Freemasonry, other key churchmen of this century, including Ecumenical Patriarchs Meletius Metaxakis and Athenagoras, were acknowledged Freemasons. Furthermore, in recent decades, Masonic periodicals in Greece have published the names of patriarchs, metropolitans, and archbishops who, it is alleged, are members of the Masonic order. Yet, the hierarchs in question have consistently declined to refute these statements (*Orthodoxos Typos*, October 30, 1992). Some individuals have ascribed this to the oaths of secrecy that Masons take.

Only the fact that they are members of the Masonic Lodge could explain why these prominent bishops evade giving a definite answer. They could praise the Masons' philanthropies and declare that there was nothing harmful for Orthodox Christians in the Lodge, but state that they were not members, in the same way that Patriarchs Demetrius of Constantinople and Parthenius of Alexandria lauded the Moslems, calling Mohammed a prophet of God, yet could state honestly that they were not Moslems. Denying that they were members would not necessarily be a condemnation of Masonry; nonetheless, they refuse to answer.

It would appear, in fact, that many bishops of World Orthodoxy have capitulated. For example, the new calendar Greek religious newspaper, *Orthodoxos Typos* (December 9, 1988), openly laments:

The leadership of many local new calendar Churches — that is, bishops, other clergy, theologians, etc. — have been overcome by Masonry . . . Well known church leaders are accused of being Masons. And when they are asked if they are Masons, they avoid answering. A recent example is [the new calendar Archbishop] Iakovos of America, who, despite the challenge made by *Orthodoxos Typos* (April 29, 1988) [that he answer this question], evad-

The issue is clear and requires only a simple statement on the part of these churchmen: One cannot be an Orthodox Christian and a Freemason at the same time.

If such a statement is not issued, it will only provide additional proof of what we have been saying all along: the bishops of these jurisdictions have ceased being Orthodox.

Just recently, on April 9, 1993, prompted by a petition signed by 11,000 laypeople, the new calendar Church of Cyprus condemned Freemasonry as a religion incompatible with Christianity. Would that the hierarchy of the other Patriarchates and Local Churches followed suit and took a similar step in the right direction.

By means of this encyclical, beloved faithful in the Lord, the clergy of our Church felt that it was our pastoral duty to set forth our concern regarding the Masonic religion — not only for our own flocks, which, thank God, are informed in this matter — but primarily in order to make known once again the Church's position on this subject, and also to draw attention to Masonry's anti-Christian tenets and the active role these principles play in today's religious life — especially in the Ecumenical Movement.

In this matter, it is important that all of us, clergy and laypeople alike, take a stand; for *all* Orthodox Christians are called upon to defend and uphold the Holy Orthodox Faith, no matter what their rank may be.

In their reply to Pope Pius IX in 1848, the Orthodox Patriarchs declared that:

Among us, neither Patriarchs nor Councils were ever able to introduce innovations, because the defender of Religion is the very Body of the Church, that is, the people themselves.

Likewise, Saint Theodore the Studite teaches us:

It is a commandment of the Lord that we should not be silent when the Faith is in peril. So, when it is a matter of the Faith, one cannot say, "What am I? A priest, a ruler, a soldier, a farmer, a poor man? I have no say or concern in this matter." Alas! the stones shall cry out, and you remain silent and unconcerned?

(PG 99, 1321 AB)

Therefore, beloved, let us devote ourselves to the study of our

subscribe to such a notion of God in becoming members of the Masonic fraternity, the Church, to be consistent, should abandon all mission work, particularly in foreign fields. Why should we spend millions of dollars in sending missionaries to India, Japan, New Guinea, Africa, etc., and in supporting their work there? Why should we ask young men and women to sacrifice many of the best years of their lives in bringing the Gospel of Christ to pagans, if, after all, the heathen idol is just another true representation of the 'one God and Father of us all,' if it makes no difference by what name God is called, so long as you worship Him under some name and by some cult?"

This mentality, beloved faithful, explains why a Russian Orthodox bishop can say that he intends to print the Koran for Soviet Muslims; it explains why a Greek Orthodox patriarch can say with impunity, "When I speak against . . . Buddhism, then I am not found in agreement with God"; it explains why a pope of Rome can take part in pagan rites and allow statues of Buddha to be placed on top of papal altars, and have Hindu deities invoked in papal churches; it explains why participants at the General Assemblies of the World Council of Churches can invoke the "dead" spirit of Jesus and sponsor pagan ceremonies and prayers to various heathen deities.

In other words, "Any god will do."

Obviously, something has gone very wrong within the fabric of these "Christian" denominations if they are now party to or condone this sort of thinking.

Beloved faithful, much more could be said about Freemasonry's inherently syncretistic and anti-Christian character, but what we have noted above is sufficient for any intelligent Orthodox Christian. It is clear even from these few Masonic sources which we have quoted that Freemasonry's religious character is an established fact. Since this is the case, surely, is it not absolutely mandatory, especially for the current patriarchs of today's "official" Orthodoxy — and, in particular, the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Patriarch of Alexandria, the Patriarch of Antioch, and their exarchates abroad — to pronounce their condemnation of this pagan-inclusive and deistic religion that has led so many people astray?

ed taking any position on the subject of Masonry, although various periodicals accuse him of having joined its ranks.

The usual response to this matter is, "But Freemasonry is not a religion, nor does it purport to be one." This, however, is not true.

Perhaps the best response is to allow authoritative voices within the Masonic movement to speak for themselves. Clearly and without bias, they define Freemasonry's true nature.

One remarkable work on the subject of Masonry is J. W. Acker's *Strange Altars* (now out of print), which is the source of most of the citations that follow.

Let us begin with Albert G. Mackey, Past General Grand High Priest and Secretary General of the Supreme Council, 33rd degree, for the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States, and universally recognized authority on Freemasonry in the United States. In the *Masonic Ritualist*, Mackey writes, "Masonry is a religious institution" (p. 44). On page 46 he says: "Freemasonry is indebted for its origin to its religious and philosophic character." Again, on page 14 he declares: "A lodge is said to be opened in the name of God and the holy Saints John [the Baptist and the Evangelist], as a declaration of the sacred and religious purposes of our meeting."

Charles C. Smith in *The Builder*, II, 50, writes: "Masonry is a branch upon the tree of religion. Masonry without religion is like a branch severed from the vine. The particular lodge that is not permeated with the religious spirit is not true Masonry as such."

As J. W. Acker, the author of *Strange Altars*, observes: "Masonry has many of the features of a religious institution. The buildings in which Masons meet are called 'temples' and 'cathedrals.' The lodge hall is fitted out with an altar, upon which lies an open Bible. Each lodge has a chaplain, who opens and closes the meeting with prayers, and prefaces initiations and other ceremonies with petitions addressed to a Supreme Being. Speculative Freemasonry is a religious philosophy which pretends to the possession of divine truth."

In the *Iowa Quarterly Bulletin* of April, 1917, (p. 14), it is explicitly stated that Masonry is "a divinely appointed institution, designed to draw men nearer to God, to give them a clearer conception of

their proper relationship to God as their Heavenly Father, to men as their brethren, and the ultimate destiny of the human soul."

Mackey, in his book, *Masonic Ritualist*, (p.101), explains the purpose of the rites of the lodge: "Here must commence his Masonic labor — here he must enter upon those glorious, though difficult, researches, the end of which is to be the possession of divine truth."

In Malcolm Duncan's *Masonic Ritual and Monitor*, (p. 50), an explanation is given of Freemasonry's plan of salvation and of how a good Mason may, through good works, obtain a blessed hereafter. Duncan writes that by the lambskin each Mason wears, he is reminded "of that purity of life and conduct which is essentially necessary to his gaining admission into the celestial lodge above where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides."

But if "purity of life and conduct" can, in themselves, accomplish all this, what need is there of Christ? Cannot an idolater or an agnostic accomplish the same? Furthermore, the "Supreme Architect of the Universe" cannot be the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, for such a teaching would offend all Muslim and Jewish Masons.

As J. W. Acker notes, "Although Masonry is a religious institution, it is not a Christian institution. Witness its own authorities on this point. Chase in his *Digest of Masonic Law*, (p. 208), says: 'Blue Masonry (the first three degrees) has nothing whatever to do with the Bible. It is not founded on the Bible. If it were, it would not be Masonry.'"

What is Masonry's view of the Bible? Asahel W. Gage in *The Builder*, I, 235, writes: "God's Holy Book, His revelation to us, is the guide in our search for light. To the Jew this Holy book is the history of Israel, substantially the Old Testament. To the Christian it is the Old and New Testaments. To the Mohammedan, it is the Koran; to the Hindu, the Veda. But whatever book it is, it is the Holy Book of the seeker for Light and that which he believes to be the Word of God. The Holy Book, together with the square and compasses, are the great lights of Masonry." From this statement it should be obvious that Masonry places the books of other religions on an equal footing with the Bible.

The *Iowa Quarterly Bulletin*, July, 1915, (p. 17), has the following quotation: "Therefore [Masonry] invites to its altar men of all faiths, knowing that . . . while they read different volumes, they are in fact reading the same vast Book of the Faith of Man as revealed in the struggle and sorrow of the race in its quest of God." As Acker remarks, "Though the Bible is open on the altars of Masonic lodges in this country, that does not mean that it is regarded by them as the only or chief source of revelation. All Masons are reading 'the same vast Book of the Faith of Man.'"

What attitude does Masonry have toward God? Ward, in *Freemasonry: Its Aims and Ideals*, (p. 187), writes: "Freemasonry has taught that each man can, by himself, work out his own conception of God and thereby achieve salvation."

In *New Age* (January, 1943, p. 33), we find these verses:

The one Great God looked down and smiled
And counted each his loving child
For Turk and Brahman, Monk and Jew,
Had reached Him through the God he knew.

"Now," writes Acker, "if after reviewing these citations from Masonic authorities a Christian nevertheless feels that he can conscientiously worship the Trinity at the Altar of Masonry, he should consider that in the 'Holy' Royal Arch Degree of Masonry the ['Lost Word' of the original 'Three Grand Masters'] is claimed to have been rediscovered after 470 years and is revealed as 'Jah-Bul-On.' This is the Masonic Trinity. 'Jah' is an abbreviation for the Hebrew name for God, Jahweh, or Jehovah; 'Bul' or 'Bal' is the name for the Assyrian deity [Baal]; 'On' is the designation for the god of the Egyptians, or, as some contend, the god of the sun, [since the Egyptian city of On — Heliopolis — was identified with sun-worship]. In the face of this Masonic concept of God, how can the Christian maintain that he is not guilty of an act of blasphemy if he worships at the altar of Masonry erected to this nonexistent idol? Should not such an altar be for him a Strange Altar?

"In short, the Masonic concept of God is deism. Or, more popularly expressed, 'Any god will do.' Now, if this view of God is permitted to permeate the Church, and its members are allowed to